

Introduction

Why Voyage to San Francisco?



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, 03.02.G1.

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Goldminer

People come to San Francisco for a variety of reasons including a search for wealth, to escape persecution, to acquire land, to open new businesses and to find a better life. This lesson explores the experiences of people who came to San Francisco by sea during the Gold Rush and what life was like for them in early California. The characters in the story explore the important water routes from San Francisco Bay to the gold fields in the California foothills.

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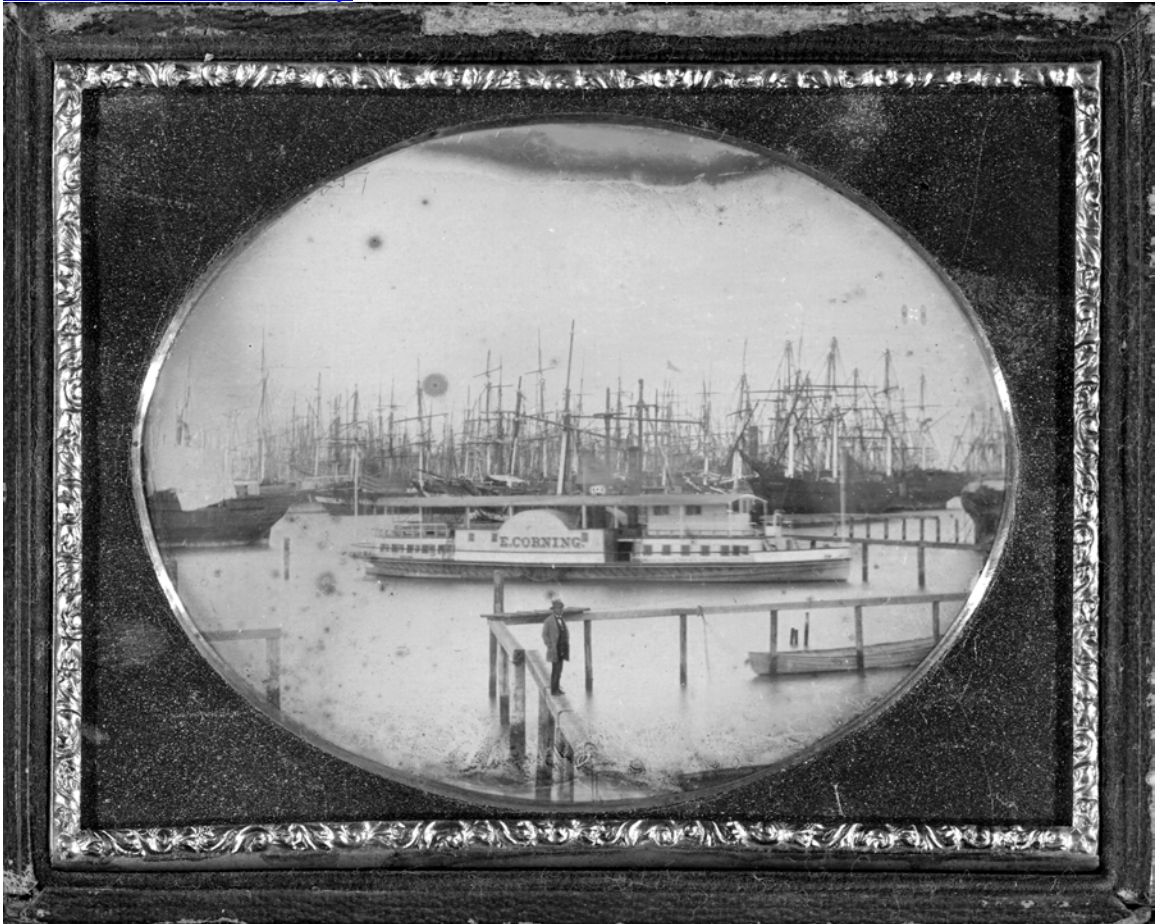
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Focus Question: Why Voyage to San Francisco?

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Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

P81-010n Ferry ERASTUS CORNING, possibly first ferry on Bay. Probably Charles Minturn, owner, foreground. Photo attributed to Frederick Combs, ca 1851.

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Why Voyage to San Francisco?

Imagine yourself viewing this harbor.

- Can you estimate how many ships and boats are there?
- Can you imagine taking a trip on this ferry? Where do you think it would take you in 1851?

Setting the Stage: Why Voyage to San Francisco?

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Why Sail to San Francisco?

A voyage across the ocean to San Francisco could take months, cost the whole of your savings and put your life at risk. Yet tens of thousands of people, seeking their fortunes, fleeing oppression or starting a new life found the journey to be worth the hardships.

City of Dreams

San Francisco promised a new life. In what has been called the largest human migration since the crusades, more than 11,000 deepwater vessels arrived in San Francisco in 1849 and 1850. Before the gold rush the peninsula was visited by Spanish and Mexican packets, exploring parties, traders, whalers, and hunters. But it wasn't until a few years after the American seizure of California that gold-seekers made San Francisco a major world port.

Gold fever brought Yankees by the shipload, South American miners, Asian laborers and businessmen, and every variety of European. All came for the chance to prosper from the golden wealth, though most who made money were in the transport and supply business and stayed far from the mines.

Additional Resources

<http://www.museumca.org/goldrush/>

Oakland Museum of California

A thorough history of the California gold rush with curriculum and artifact pictures.

<http://www.museumca.org/goldrush/art.html>

Oakland Museum of California

Art of the gold rush. Includes pictures of the times and tales from the mines.

<http://www.museumca.org/goldrush/fever10.html>

Information on coming by sea to California; includes an audio clip describing a sea voyage.

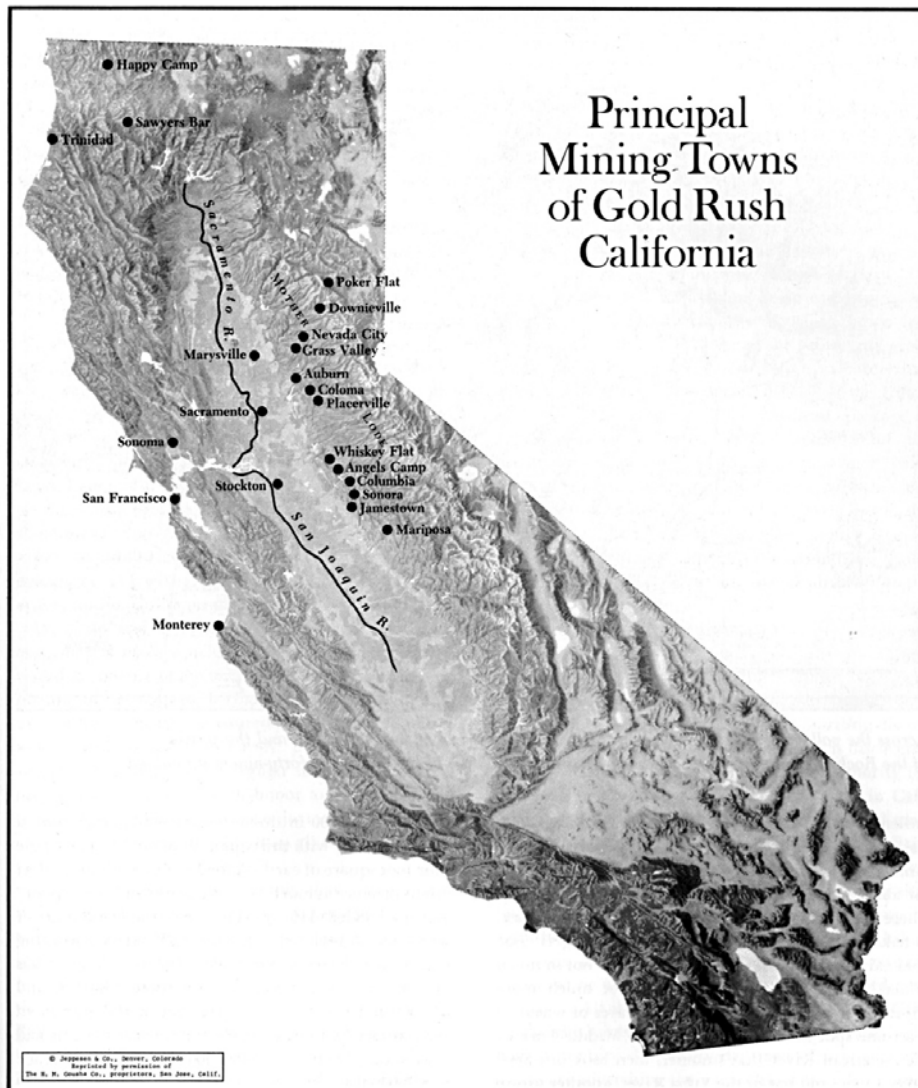
<http://www.pbs.org/goldrush/sanfran.html>

Public Broadcasting Service

A history of San Francisco and how it grew during the gold rush.

Map Challenges: Why Voyage to San Francisco?

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Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
From "California, an Illustrated History" by T. H. Watkins

This map shows the location of the gold mining towns in California. Locate the coastal mountains, the flat Central Valley and the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

- Find and list at least five mining towns.
- In which region are most of the gold mining towns located (coastal mountains, central valley, or the Sierra Nevada Mountains)?
- Where do you think most of the California gold was located?
- What do you think the stories are behind the names of these towns?

Seaside Story: Pursuing the Golden Dream

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Alvin is 12 years old. He is the oldest of five children, three boys and two girls. Alvin's father, Melvin, is an African American. Melvin was a slave in the south, but escaped to Boston with his family. He was looking for a new life out west because he heard conversations in the house of his master about a new land called California. They said that a man found a huge vein of gold in the hills there.

He took all of the money he had saved up from his job in Boston and bought tickets for Alvin and himself. And so, father and son, boarded the clipper ship that would take them to gather their fortune in gold. Melvin knew he could send for his wife and other children as soon as he struck it rich in the California gold fields!

The voyage by sea was really difficult. They left Boston with good weather in April from Boston. But by the time they rounded the Cape Horn, they knew they were in some of the roughest seas in the world. They were bounced and thrown around in the big ship that looked like a small toy on the large, open sea. The waves were up to 30 feet high in some places. Often they could not see the sky for the high waves on either side of the ship. They went through gale force winds as they rounded Cape Horn. The ship bent and groaned under the huge waves and strong wind it endured. All of the passengers suffered from a seasickness that seemed to last forever. They were bruised and exhausted from the passenger's constant fight with nature. It was a long and difficult voyage, but Alvin and his father believed it was worth all of the pain to claim a small fortune in gold at the end of the journey.

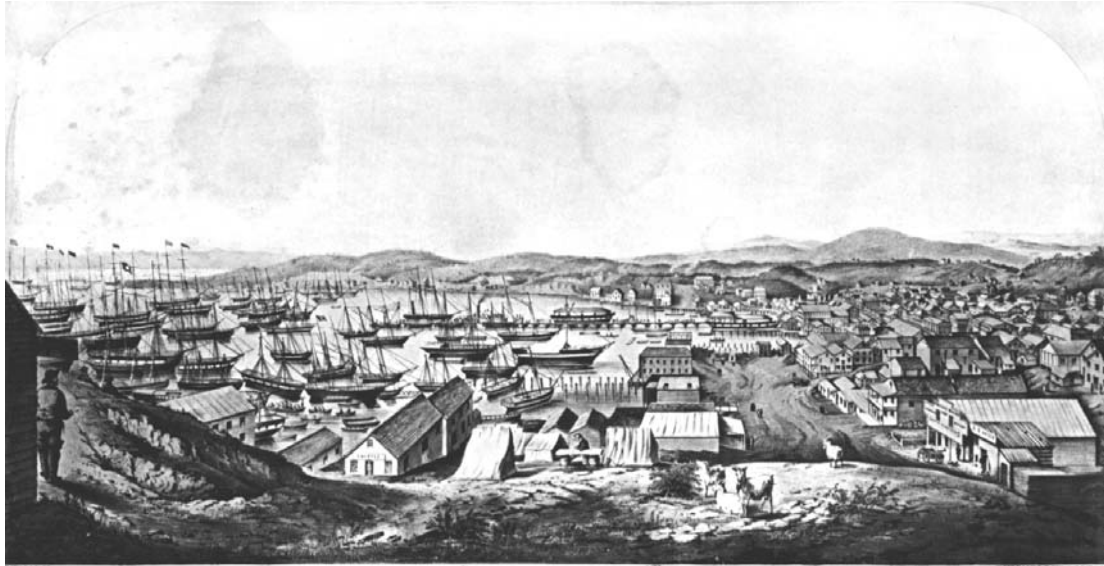
On July 10, 1850, they sailed through the small entry of the San Francisco Bay. The great number of tents on the hills and buildings by the wharf were such an amazing sight. But what got most of their attention was the sight of the many ships just anchored in the bay, side by side. There must have been a thousand of them, abandoned and waiting like dog waiting for their masters, silent and quietly sleeping.



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.
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When they got to their anchorage they were told they would have to wait days to unload. Alvin asked the second mate why all of the ships were abandoned and anchored in the bay. He told the story of how so many people had rushed to California to find gold. When the people arrived, they would just abandon their ships in their rush to be the first to find gold. Even the sailors from the ships would go, leaving no one to take care of the ships or sail them into port. Even so, there was no room to dock these ships because there were so many.

Alvin's father quickly and secretly paid the second mate some money to have a small sailboat come to the side of their ship and pick them up. They abandoned some of their belongings and jumped on the little boat before the other passengers. Looking back they could see the other people on their ship hailing small boats and begging them to stop. One man actually jumped into the water and started to swim to shore! It was a real rush to the gold and they were ahead of the others in their sleek little sailboat. Alvin thought about all the other people who had abandoned all of those anchored, lifeless ships in the bay. Where were those people anyway?



VIEW OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, A11.15695p.

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Within an hour Alvin and his father were gliding swiftly along in the small sailboat through the bay to the delta of the Sacramento River. That river would be their route to the California foothills, the gold, and their fortune. As they went up the Carquinez Straits, they passed the Benicia, which was soon to become the California State capitol on September 9, 1950.

The excitement made Alvin's heart pound. He knew that it would just be a few more days until he and his father would get to the hills to claim their big vein of gold. He would not have to work as hard as his father and his grandfather. He would be a man of fortune and live a very good life back in Boston. Their family would be of the first African American families to be rich!

The captain of the small sailing boat told them where to outfit themselves for the gold fields. He told them they would have to come back down to Marysville in order to exchange their gold for money. Merchants weighed gold dust and nuggets on special gold scales. They determined the amount of money the gold was worth by its weight. Gold is still measured for its weight on scales today.

Alvin could hardly wait! He was going to become a rich man at the age of 12! His father would never have to work again. Soon they were sailing into Sacramento, a fair sized town with all kinds of people milling about the dock areas. They were left off at the dock and they started up the crowded streets to buy their picks, shovels, gold pans, food, blankets, and their mule to carry it all. What a sight. There were people in the streets selling all kinds of things, and people shoving their way along to get their supplies first. Alvin was pushed down in the street once and his father had to shove people away to pick him up. There was a frantic feeling in the air and it was easy to catch it. Alvin and his father began to rush like all of the others, and finally got their mule loaded. Instead of resting in the hotel as they had planned, they headed straight up into the hills, tired, but excited to be there. Alvin named the mule Clyde.



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.
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Both Alvin and his father, Melvin found out soon that life is hard on gold miners. Once they arrived in the Sierra Foothills, they had to make camp. They lived in tents, carried their water from streams and bent over all day panning for gold in the icy creeks. Alvin had to feed and care for their mule, Clyde. All day long they used a pick and shovel to dig into the hard earth that is mostly granite rock. They were constantly

searching for that huge vein of gold. They found out soon that very few gold miners actually struck gold.

One day, months later, Alvin's father went to town with Clyde to get some more food and supplies. Alvin got up early with his father and went directly to the creek. He decided to pan that day instead of digging for the gold. It just seemed easier and his muscles were aching badly from swinging the pick into the granite stones hour after hour.

Alvin took out his pan and started to sift for gold when all of a sudden he saw the largest golden nugget of his life! It was right there in his pan! Alvin was so excited that he almost dropped it! He quickly shoved it in his pocket and began to pan in the icy water more and more. When his father came back, he showed the nugget and over the next few days they found a few smaller nuggets.

That night, word got around that Alvin and his father struck gold! Many people came over to look at the nugget and ask where they found it. Alvin's father was very careful not to tell them. But one of the men, Old Bart, watched them go out to the stream in the morning and followed. He ran along and tried to push Alvin out of the way! "This is my claim!" Said Old Bart. "You have no right to pan for gold here. Move along downstream!"

Alvin was frightened because Old Bart was very strong, big and tough. It turned out that he was mean too. He shoved Alvin out of the way and started to fist fight Alvin. In the end, Alvin won the fight and Old Bart went back to his own claim.

Alvin and his father could not find any more gold in the creek, so the next day they loaded up Clyde with all of their belongings and started out for Marysville to exchange their gold nuggets for money. It was a long and hot journey. By then summer had settled in the foothills and it was very hot, about 110 degrees in the shade! As the sun beat down on Alvin, his father, and the poor mule, they longed to be back at home in Boston. But still they forged on to climb the hills and run down the valley.

When they finally arrived in Marysville, they found a large town with all kinds of people. There were saloons, hotels, stores, stables, blacksmiths, and people from all over the world. There was a special section of town

down by the river called Chinatown. There were many Chinese men there all talking and some playing a game called Mah Jong. Next to the Yuba river, a sacred temple was built and dedicated to the Chinese River God, Bo Kai. The Chinese say that Bo Kai would never let the river flood in Marysville as long as the temple stands as it does today. It has never flooded in Marysville to this day!

First they went to the assayer's office where their gold nuggets were weighed and exchanged for money. It wasn't a fortune, but it was a good sum of money. They stopped at some stores to buy new clothes. They found new pants at a store owned by Levi Strauss. People said he made the pants from the old sails discarded from ships. They went to a hotel, checked in and immediately took a bath and put on the new clothes they bought at the store. Then they went to the saloon and ordered a huge dinner! Over dinner, they talked to some other miners and found out how really hard it was to find the gold lying hidden in the California foothills. They began to wonder if they should go back to the hills to claim more gold or to go back home. It was a hard decision.

- At the end of the story, what do you think they decided to do?
- What would you do?
- Why do you think Alvin and his father came to San Francisco by ship?
- Why did they come to San Francisco in the first place?
- Do you think they found their dream?

Maritime Artifacts: Why Voyage to San Francisco?

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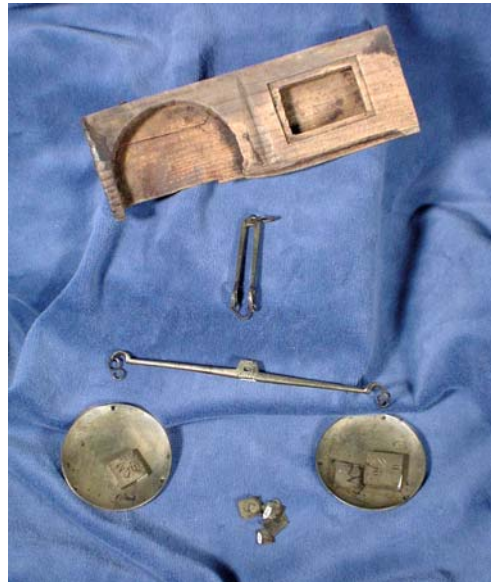
Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, SAFR 8169.

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Gold-Bearing Rock

A piece andesite rock from Washoe County, Nevada shows blooms of crystalline gold. This is a very special and unusual type of gold.

Maritime Artifacts: Why Voyage to San Francisco?



Source: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, SAFR 8941.
Warning: this material may be protected by copyright law.

Gold Rush Merchant Scales

Gold was the magnet that drew the gold seekers called Argonauts to California. Scales were important when gold dust was used for everyday purchases. This set, dating to 1851, was found in a dig, also called an excavation, near the Transamerica Building in San Francisco.

Standards Based Activity: Goldminer Newspaper Article

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Activity Process and Outcome

Students will imagine they are newspaper reporters from Boston who were sent to California in the year 1849. Their newspaper companies want them to get a story that will spread the news about the California Gold Rush back home in Boston and New York. One morning they walk down to the San Francisco waterfront and are amazed by the number of ships that are abandoned, just floating in the Bay. When they start to ask the locals questions, they find out why these ships are there.

Students read the Gold Miner story and web site information about the connection between San Francisco and the Gold Rush to answer the following questions that will help students generate ideas for their newspaper article.

Activity Objective

Students will discover how gold miners came to California for the gold rush and learn about the hardships they faced in the process. Students learn that gold was only found by a few and that the real money was made in related industries that began as a result of the gold rush.

Instruction

1. Print and distribute the story, *Pursuing the Golden Dream*, for students to read.
2. Suggest the following web sites to read for further research on sailing to San Francisco during the gold rush.

<http://www.museumca.org/goldrush/>

Oakland Museum of California

A thorough history of the California gold rush with curriculum and artifact pictures.

<http://www.museumca.org/goldrush/art.html>

Oakland Museum of California

Art of the gold rush. Includes pictures of the times and tales from the mines.

<http://www.museumca.org/goldrush/fever10.html>

Information on coming by sea to California; includes an audio clip describing a sea voyage.

<http://www.pbs.org/goldrush/sanfran.html>

Public Broadcasting Service

A history of San Francisco and how it grew during the gold rush.

3. Ask students to work in small groups. Print a copy of the worksheet for each student. Students imagine they are interviewing a person who just sailed into San Francisco and is on his/her way up to the hills of California to find a fortune in gold. They can ask the following questions on the activity worksheet.

- Why did you come to San Francisco?
- Why did you choose to come by ship?
- Where are you from?
- Why are these boats out in the harbor?
- Where did the people go when they left the ships?
- Where are the ships' crews?
- How did they get from the ships to where they were going?
- Do you think the owners will come back to claim their ships?
- What will happen to these ships if the owners don't come back?

Ask students to keep in mind the following reasons people came to San Francisco:

- Gold Rush
- Escape persecution
- Business
- Land
- Political power
- Jobs
- Natural resources
- Knowledge

4. Students can question and answer within their groups. The group recorder can write down the answers on the worksheet.

5. Students use the answers to the questions to write a newspaper article that describes what it was like to sail into the harbor, see all of the abandoned ships, and go up to the foothills to find gold.
6. Groups can exchange their newspaper articles and compare information and style.

(This activity is most successful after you have taught the general format of a newspaper article and how to write one.)

Gold Rush Activity Sheet

Imagine you are in San Francisco in the year 1849 and you work for the local newspaper as a reporter. Your assignment is to interview a person who just sailed into San Francisco Bay and is on his/her way up to the foothills of California to find a fortune in gold.

Ask the following questions in your group and have the recorder write the answers on the lines below.

- Why did you come to San Francisco?

- Why did you choose to come by ship?

- Where are you from?

- Why are these boats out in the harbor?

- Where did the people go when they left the ships?

- Where are the ships' crews?

- How did they get from the ships to where they were going?

- Do you think the owners will come back to claim their ships?

- What will happen to these ships if the owners don't come back?

Quick Assessment

Check newspaper articles for details that address the above questions and reasons people came to San Francisco. As an option for assessment, create a rubric with students to address the details covered in the questions and in the list of reasons people came to San Francisco. Ask student groups to exchange newspaper articles and use the rubric to assess the articles.

California State Content Standards for Public Schools

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The following standards correlate to this unit.

HISTORY STANDARDS

Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills Grades K-5

Chronological and Spatial Thinking Chronological and Spatial Thinking

2. Students correctly apply terms related to time, including *past*, *present*, *future*, *decade*, *century*, and *generation*.
3. Students explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same.
4. Students use map and globe skills to determine the absolute locations of places and interpret information available through a map's or globe's legend, scale, and symbolic representations.
5. Students judge the significance of the relative location of a place (e.g., proximity to a harbor, on trade routes) and analyze how relative advantages or disadvantages can change over time.

Research, Evidence, and Point of View Chronological and Spatial Thinking

2. Students correctly apply terms related to time, including *past*, *present*, *future*, *decade*, *century*, and *generation*.
3. Students explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same.

California: A Changing State Grade 4

- 4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California.
 1. Explain and use the coordinate grid system of latitude and longitude to determine the absolute locations of places in California and on Earth.
 4. Identify the locations of the Pacific Ocean, rivers, valleys, and mountain passes and explain their effects on the growth of towns.
 5. Use maps, charts, and pictures to describe how communities in California vary in land use, vegetation, wildlife, climate, population density, architecture, services, and transportation.
 6. Distinguish between the North and South Poles; the equator and the prime meridian; the tropics; and the hemispheres, using coordinates to plot locations.
 7. Identify the state capital and describe the various regions of California, including how their characteristics and physical environments (e.g., water, landforms, vegetation, and climate) affect human activity.

United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation Grade 5

LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

Grades 4 and 5

2.0 Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)

Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They describe and connect the essential ideas, arguments, and perspectives of the text by using their knowledge of text structure, organization, and purpose. The selections in *Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight* illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students. In addition, by grade eight, students read one million words annually on their own, including a good representation of grade-level-appropriate narrative and expository text (e.g., classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, online information). In grade five, students make progress toward this goal.

Structural Features of Informational Materials

- 2.1 Understand how text features (e.g., format, graphics, sequence, diagrams, illustrations, charts, maps) make information accessible and usable.
- 2.2 Analyze text that is organized in sequential or chronological order.

Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 2.3 Discern main ideas and concepts presented in texts, identifying and assessing evidence that supports those ideas.
- 2.4 Draw inferences, conclusions, or generalizations about text and support them with textual evidence and prior knowledge.

Expository Critique

- 2.5 Distinguish facts, supported inferences, and opinions in text.